A Synopsis

Novel Titles as the Noun Phrases : A Structural Analysis in Aptness, Taxonomy and Thematic Relevance (1837-1901)

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1.Introduction :

Every title is an extended metaphor of the author's view of the novel. A title ought to be apt, suitable and suggestive of its contents. The choice of the title of the novel is a microcosm of the world of the novel. Every novelist through his titles gives the readers his own personal, idiosyncratic vision of the novel's world. This vision is acted out by the various elements like characters, plot, themes, setting and equally by its title. Title is an expository fictional artifact which conditions and qualifies the other components like milieu, plot, characters, dialogue, style etc.

This is a novel study on the novel titles since it focuses on the micro-component of the novels to know more and more about the less and less i.e. title. Even the most common and unremarkable kind of title, the bare name of novel's central character, will tell us something in advance about how to read Jane Austen's *Emma* (1816) is about a singular and powerful individual, freed by wealth and lack of parental guidance, to exercise her sometimes imperious will. It is no accident that this is the only Austen novel to take its heroine's name as its title.

Unsurprisingly, both novelists and their publishers care very much about titles, knowing that they are the means by which a book first reaches out to its potential readers. Publishers have been known to put their novelists right in this matter. When Charles Monteith, editor at Faber and happened upon a novel by an unknown writer called William Golding that had been rejected by up to twenty other publishers, it was called *Strangers from Within*. Amongst other

adjustments that Monteith suggested was the changing of the title to *Lord of the Flies*. The title tells us, both more clearly and more subtly than Golding's earlier suggestion, how all that is fearful on the island comes from within the boys themselves.What about the title that seems a guide to the reader? While it is common for a title to tell us who a novel is about (David Copperfield (1849-50), Mrs Dalloway (1925) or where it is set (Mansfield Park (1814), Washington Square (1880), it is more unusual, and more pointed, for the title to declare the book's theme. When he called his 1999 novel *Disgrace,* J.M.Coetzee joined other contemporary practicing novelists who have announced their works with one-word abstractions. In recent years, there have been plenty. Salman Rushdie's *Shame* (1983) and *Fury (*2001). Peter Carey's *Bliss* (1981), Anita Brookner's *Providence* (1982), A.S. Byatt's *Possession,* Ian McEwan's *Atonement.*

In each case the author appears to be pressing on the reader the significance, in the abstract, of the story that is to follow. These novels risk sounding as if they have theories in mind, each title being a nudge to future undergraduate, a clue to the best focus of an essay. Perhaps such titles are particularly likely from novelists who themselves have had an academic training and have been taught to find the unifying ideas in narratives.

2. The Study Period and Limitations of the Study:

It is necessary to delimit the study by the choice of the study period. The researcher is clearly aware of the fact that the Victorian novel is overworked area of the study , but the aspect of this research – the study of the novel titles as the noun phrases- has been a neglected and marginal field at the same time.

Researchers across the globe might think that no stone has left unturned in this area . but the researcher is sure no such study on the novel titles as the noun phrases with reference to the aptness, taxonomy and thematic relevance, has been undertaken.

The period of study chosen by the researcher is Victorian Period i.e. 1837-1901. Victorian Period, The beginning of the Victorian Period is frequently dated 1830, or alternatively 1832 (the passage of the first Reform Bill),and sometimes 1837 (the accession of Queen Victoria); it extends to the death of Victoria in 1901.

Historians often subdivide the long period into three phases : Early Victorian (to 1848), Mid-Victorian (1848-70), and Late Victorian (1870-1901). Much writing of the period , whether imaginative or didactic , in verse or in prose, dealt with or reflected the pressing social, economic, religious, and intellectual issues and problems of that era.

Victorian age was the age of fiction as Romantic was of poetry and Elizabethan was of drama. The most distinguished of many excellent novelists of this period were Charlotte and Emily Bronte, Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot, George Meredith, Anthony Trollope, Thomas Hardy, and Samuel Butler.

3.Objectives of the Research The present study aims at the following objectives: i) to analyze the novel titles as the noun phrases, structurally, to bring out the constituent elements of the titles.

ii) to justify the aptness and suitability of the novel titles as the guide to its readers.

iii) to study the taxonomic scheme of the novel titles in order to classify them into the various types like character, quotation, abstract titles etc.

iv) to study the meronomic (title as a part of the whole) role of the novel title in overall aesthetic achievement of the novels.

V) to examine the thematic relevance of the novel titles as the key expository element of the novel.

4. Hypothesis Hypothesis reflects the researchers guess as to probable outcome of the research and it places clear and specific goals before the researcher. Hypothesis provides a basis for selecting samples and research procedures to meet these goals. Hypothesis helps in deciding the right direction in which the researcher has to proceed and also helps in selecting pertinent facts. For this study, the researcher has formulated the following Hypothesis -

The structural analysis of the novel titles as the noun phrases guides the readers to estimate the title as the suggestive, intentional, relevant, apt and expository artifact contributing towards the aesthetic end of the novel as a literary form.

5.Operational Frame of Concepts

Aptness of the title refers to the suitability of the title and its relevance to the plot , characters and other components of the novel.

Meronomy the study of the part in relevance to the whole, here the title in relation to the novel as a literary form.

Noun Phrase is a group of meaningful words with noun as an obligatory element together functioning as a noun.

Novel Title is a name as given by its author or publisher and as it appears on the title page of the novel .

Structural Analysis in this context refers to the analysis of the noun phrases with the help of a tree diagram.

Taxonomy is the classification of the novel titles into various types such as character titles, quotation titles, abstract titles etc.

Thematic Relevance of the novel title refers to its reflection of the central value system and the major thematic concerns of the novel

Theme: Theme is sometimes used interchangeably with motif, but the term is more usefully applied to a general concept or doctrine, whether implicit or asserted, which an imaginative work is designed to involve and make persuasive to the reader.In other words, a theme is a central value system of a work of art.

6. The Scheme of Chapters:

The research student plans to divide the present study into six chapters.

Chapter I Introduction

The first chapter would be an introduction to the study .This chapter will be definitive in nature focusing on the novel as an art form, noun phrase structure .It will also comprise the objectives, hypothesis, methodology of research and the review of literature.

Chapter II A Structural Analysis of the Novel Titles

The second chapter on a structural analysis of the novel titlesas the noun phrases. This will comprise the in-depth analysis of the titles into the constituent elements of the titles as the noun phrases.

Chapter III Title Aptness: Dichotomy of Form Content

The third chapter would justify the aptness and suitability of the novel titles in relation to the dichotomy of the form and content. The same chapter would discuss the plot and character relevance to the titles.

Chapter IV Taxonomy of the Novel Titles

The fourth chapter relies on the taxonomy i.e. the classification of the novel titles into several types on the basis of the various taxa – quote, character, abstraction etc.

Chapter V Thematic Relevance of the Novel Titles

This chapter would throw light on the relevance of the novel titles under study to the central value-system of the novel. The titles reflect the themes. Thus , this section would concern the thematic links between the title and the novel.

Chapter VI Conclusions and Findings

The final chapter would summarise the conclusions of the study on " The Novel Titles as the Noun Phrases: A Structural Analysis in Aptness, Taxonomy and Thematic Relevance".

7.Research Methodology:

This is predominantly a qualitative, analytical, descriptive and theoretical research . Hence the main research method employed would be Library research.The researcher relies on the primary sources – the novels - and the secondary sources – articles, research papers, theses, critical books , journals etc.

The present study is on the novel titles which primarily aims at the phrasal analysis with the help of the tree diagram to bring out the constituent parts and their roles in achieving the overall aesthetic end. This structural analysis would help the researcher to judge the aptness and the thematic relevance of the novel titles. The classification of the titles in various types is also the part of the methodology of this research.

The researcher also proposes to employ the research methods and tools as the need arises with the progress of the work.

8. .Novel Titles : A Brief Survey

Novelists started using abstract-noun titles at the beginning of the nineteenth century for essentially didactic purposes. As well as those that came in pairs- Elizabeth Inchbald's *Nature and Art* (1796) or Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), there were novels like Mary Brunton's *Self-Control* (1811), Maria Edgeworth's *Patronage* (1814), and Susan Ferrier's *Marriage* (1818). Brunton's heroine discovers the joys of 'chastened affection and lengthy desires' (ch. Xxxiv, 437). Edgeworth's novel displays in lengthy detail the evils of patronage. Ferrier diagrammatically contrasts the joys of a happy marriage with the pains of one undertaken foolishly.

The one subtle early example is Austen's *Persuasion* (1818; a title decided by her brother Henry after her death, but probably in accordance with her wishes). This novel explores what persuades people not to follow their inclinations, but does not exactly recommend or condemn 'persuasion'. Later in the nineteenth century such titles became capacious rather than didactic: *War and Peace* (1863-9) is the obvious example. The title of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866) sounds so straightforward-and does indeed sum up the inevitability of consequences in the novel –yet it deliberately fails to do justice to the psychological torments that fill its pages.

With modernism, such abstract titles became open to sharply ironical use by writers like Joseph Conrad. His novel *Chance* (1914) shows how actions are determined by psychological necessity; *Victory* (1915) is about the salvation that may be found in defeat. When Conrad died, he left a novel tantalizingly incomplete called suspense. He also wrote a wonderful novella called youth (1902), about not being young any more (which became the title of Coetzee's next novel after *Disgrace*).

The title of J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* is not exactly ironical, but it is forbidding. It insists on an unconsoling theme. We are being told what the novel – for all its characters and locations and events-is really about. The title sensitizes a reader to a theme, even to a word. Phrases that could otherwise have been casual hook our attention. "The whole thing is disgraceful from beginning to end,' David Lurie's ex-wife, Rosalind, says of his affair with his student. 'Disgraceful and vulgar too' (45). Because of the book's title, we notice her easy, indeed vulgar, use of 'disgraceful', an empty expression of exasperation. She means rather little by it. We know, after all, that she is a fellow 'sensualist' and no believer in any moral requirement to curb desire. She is simply saying that people should not be so foolish. Yet we notice too how 'disgrace' means so much more than she realizes. Her ex-husband is in process of disgracing himself, dragging himself down. In the end, this disgrace will even permit him a kind of humiliated self-recognition.

The common type of title that presents itself as an authorial hint at a novel's implicit subject matter is the quotation title. This signals a relationship with another book, another author. The habit of using quotations for novel titles seems itself to have been Victorian in origin. One of the earliest examples is the best-seller *Not Wisely But Too Well* (1867) by Rhoda Broughton (the quotation, from Othello, applies to a heroine whose virtue triumphs over her amorous inclinations.) The earliest famous example is probably Hardy's *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872), an untypically cheerful story of Wessex life. The title refers the reader to a pastoral song in Shakespeare's As You Like It (ii.v), sung by an exiled courtier in the Forest of Arden.

The immediate suggestion of the title is that the novel's bucolic delights are timeless ; we have encountered them before. When he came to naming *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), however, Hardy used quotation ironically. The phrase is taken from Thomas Gray's 'Elegy Written in a Country

Churchyard'. Those who recall the original context- and in Hardy's day the 'Elegy' was still one of the best known and best loved poems in the language- would have their appreciation of the novel slightly changed. In his poem, Gray speaks of rural life 'Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife'. If you know this, Hardy's subtly amended use of the quotation is striking: the countryside he depicts is full of strife. The novel depicts the economic precariousness of rural life, as well as the destructive passions of several of its main characters. Its title is an anti-pastoral irony.

There is a difference between titles made from quotations that we are likely to recognize and those that most readers would have to look up. Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) is memorable partly because Miranda's wondering exclamation in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* was already a famous quotation. Huxley's application is effectively ironical because the dystopia of his novel is indeed a 'wonderful' world, apparently without pain or discontent. Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940) recalls probably the best-known world that John Donne ever wrote: 'and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee,. Here , we readily gather, is a novel about our common mortality. Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* (1940), like *Brave New World*, works by irony or ' antiphrasis'. Set in Mexico, its 'hero' is an alcoholic priest who practices his Catholicism at a time of religious persecution. Only because Greene's title is such a well-known phrase from the Lord's Prayer (in St Matthew's Gospel) can the author rely on his reader recognizing a religious thesis. On the one hand, the ignoble truth about ordinary, compromised human beings will not match the conventional swell of religious. Catholicism is indeed to be vindicated by Greene's story of suffering.

But what of the quotation that most readers will not recognize? The title of Michel Faber's novel of Victorian sexual mores *The Crimson Petal and the While* is strange and resonant enough to suggest that it must have some source,

but is scarcely an oft-quoted phrase. Indeed, in interviews Faber has often been asked to explain it. The frequency of the request is itself evidence that the novelist has been using the title to quiz his readers. It is hardly self-explanatory, and is not actually used within the novel. Contrast this with, say, Alan Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty* (2004): the reader who does not already recognize Hogarth's phrase for the serpentine line that characterizes beautiful forms will be told about it in the course of the book. Hollinghurst even includes an explanation of how the phrase applies to his protagonist's winding pursuit of beauty, while his acquaintances follow the straight paths of ambition. Faber's title asks the reader to try to decode it. A moment with any good dictionary of quotations will identify the quotation, though it might take a little more reading to interpret it. The phrase is taken from a lyric by Tennyson that is itself mysterious. The lyric is found within his long narrative poem The Princess (1847). In this poem's frame narrative a group of undergraduates entertain some ladies in the gardens of a country house with 'A tale for summer (The Princess, Prologue, line 205). There is agreement that the tale will be punctuated by the ladies singing 'From time to time, some ballad or a song| To give us breathing space' (Prologue, line 234-5). In the story, one of these songs is supposedly read aloud to herself by the beautiful princess Ida, who is overheard by the love-struck narrator. (He is a prince, in love with Ida, who has renounced male company to devote herself to women's education.)

We are invited to think of the long poetic association between flowers and women. Fabre's novel has two women at its centre : Agnes Rackham, the pure and religious wife; sugar, the prostitute with ideas above her station. Agnes may be ' white', but she is also a hysteric, pursued by religious visions and terrified by menstruation.

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